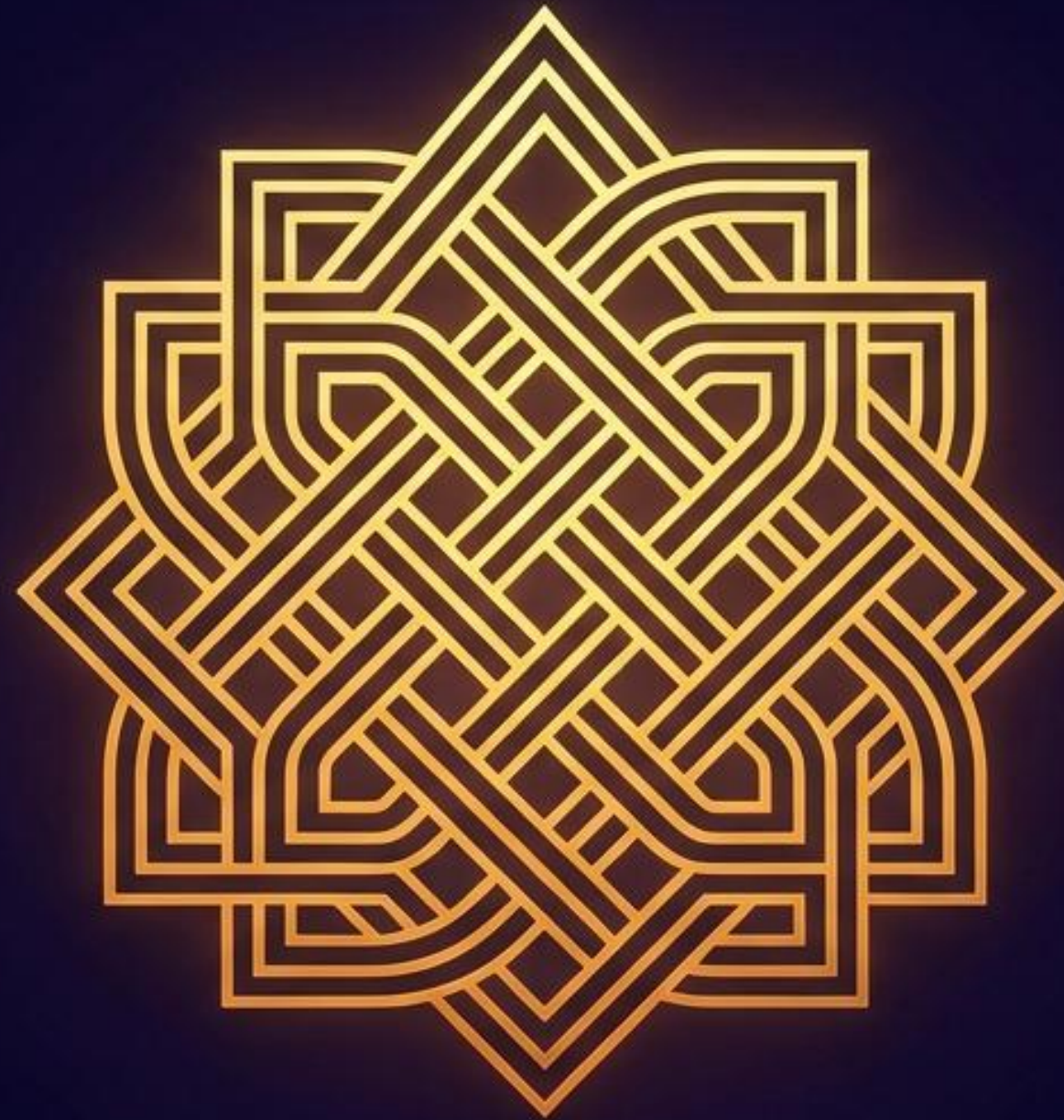


Does Omniscience Entail an Actual Infinite?



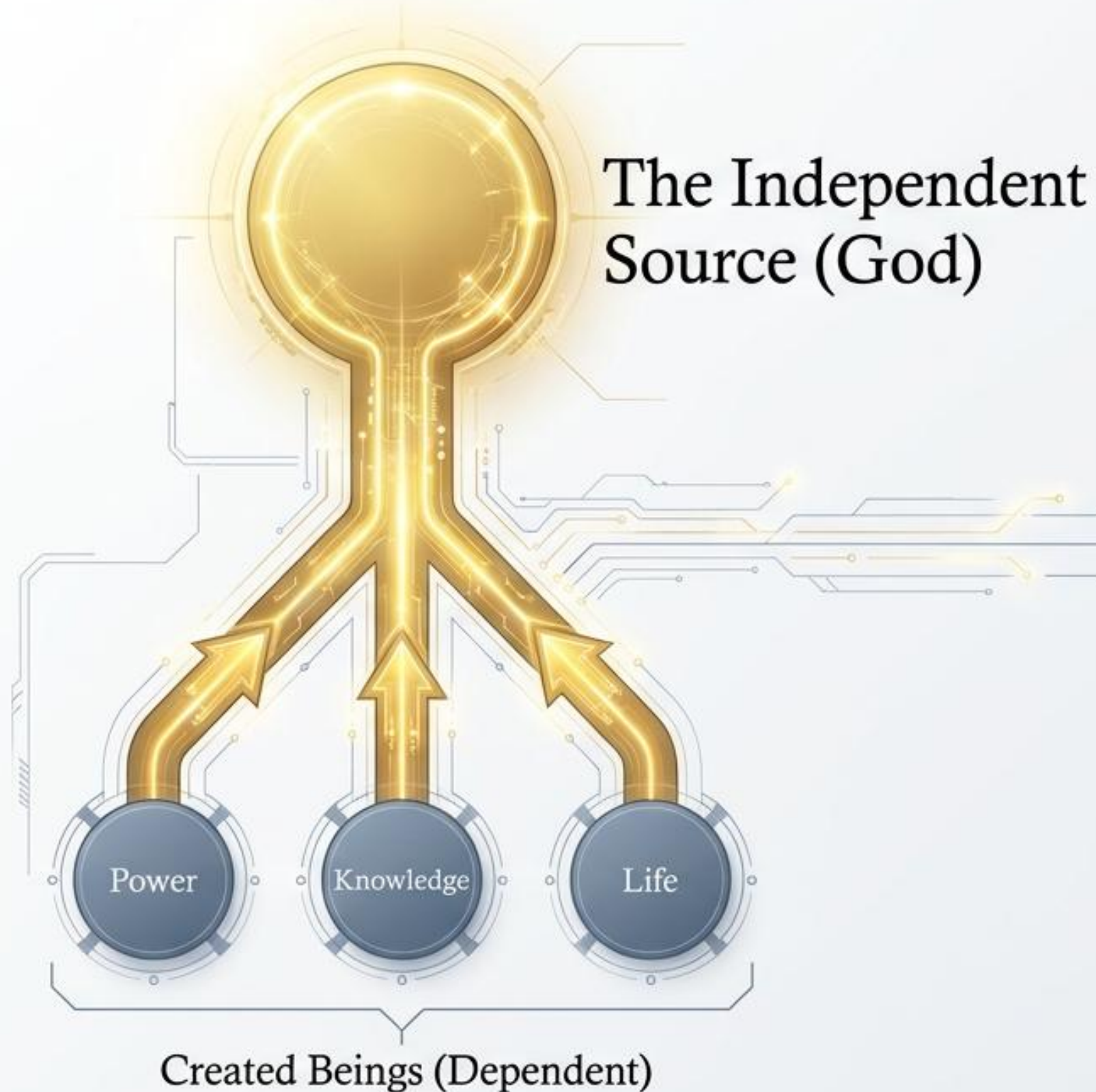
Reconstructing Ibn Taymiyyah's Philosophy of Divine Knowledge

By Mohammad Abu AbdurRahman

Premise: A conceptual framework to reconcile God's maximal perfection with the mathematical impossibility of actual infinity.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Establishing the Baseline of Absolute Perfection



A Fortiori Inference

If a created, dependent being can possess perfections without definitional deficiency, the Independent Creator must possess them necessarily and perfectly as the Source of existence.

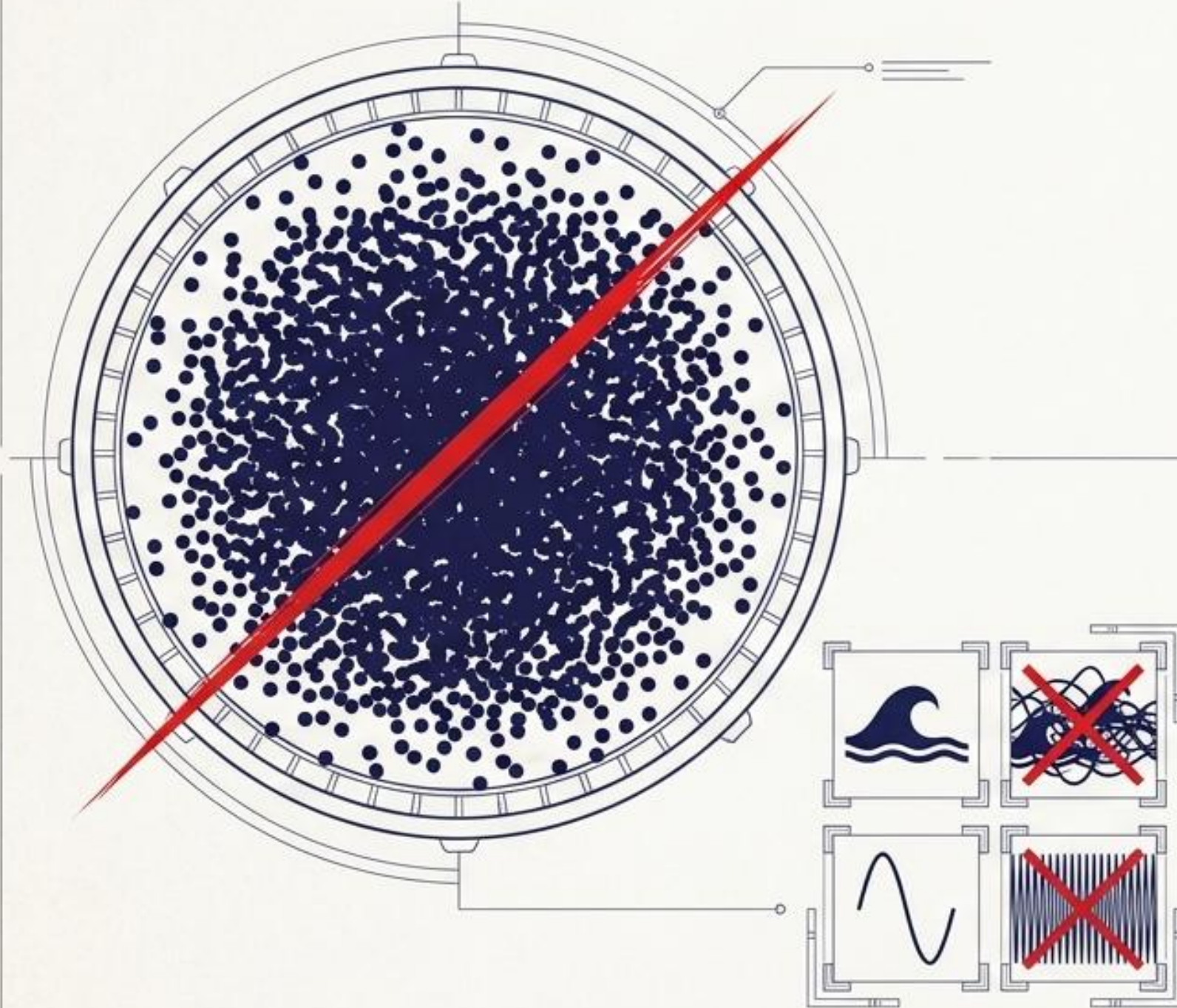
The Equal Analogy Rule

Truths about the faultless extent of God's perfection are established by measuring one perfect aspect against another.

Example: The Antichrist

If one of God's eyes is healthy, equal analogy dictates the other must also be perfectly healthy. This disproves the Antichrist's claim to divinity, as his unilateral blindness implies dependence on an external Cause.

The Threat to Omniscience: The Actual Infinite Objection



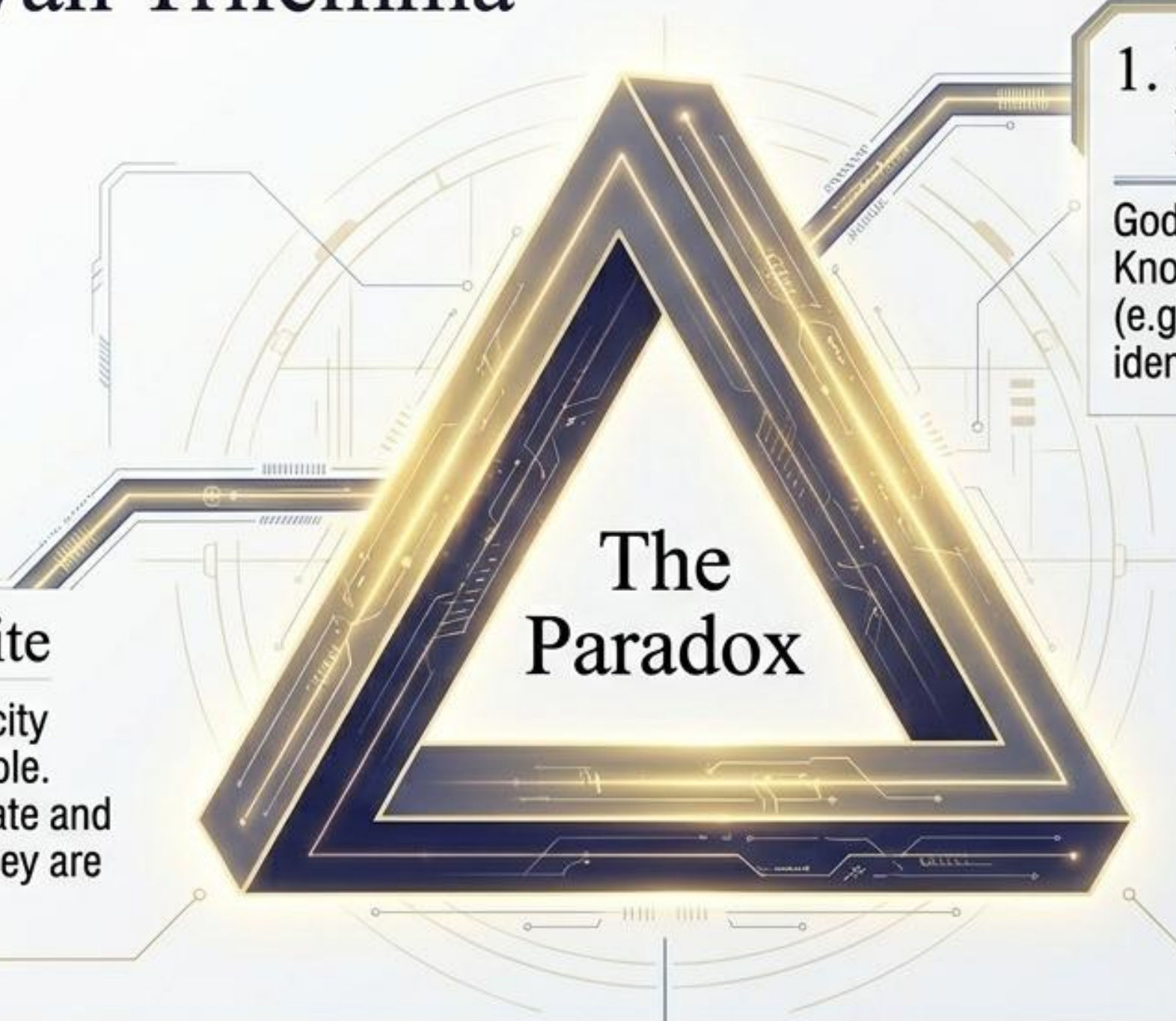
The Universal Impossibility

An actual infinite cannot exist simultaneously. The universe cannot contain an infinite number of matter particles at one moment. An ocean cannot carry infinite waves simultaneously. Light cannot possess infinite frequency.

The Atheist & Kalam Objection

If God is truly omniscient, knowing every single infinite past state, future state, and unactualized hypothetical, wouldn't an infinite number of ontologically positive beliefs have to subsist in His essence simultaneously?

The Taymiyyan Trilemma



The Paradox

1. Real Attributional Multiplicity

God is not a simple, attribute-less Cause. Knowledge possesses real multiplicity (e.g., God's knowledge of Jesus is not identical to His knowledge of Muhammad).

3. No Actual Infinite

An actually infinite multiplicity existing at once is impossible. Material substances originate and annihilate in succession; they are not infinitely divided.

2. Infinite Knowables in Detail

God knows all universals and particulars completely. He does not just pass over the details of infinite future states.

The Puzzle: How can knowledge have real multiplicity, cover infinite particulars, without creating an impossible actual infinite?

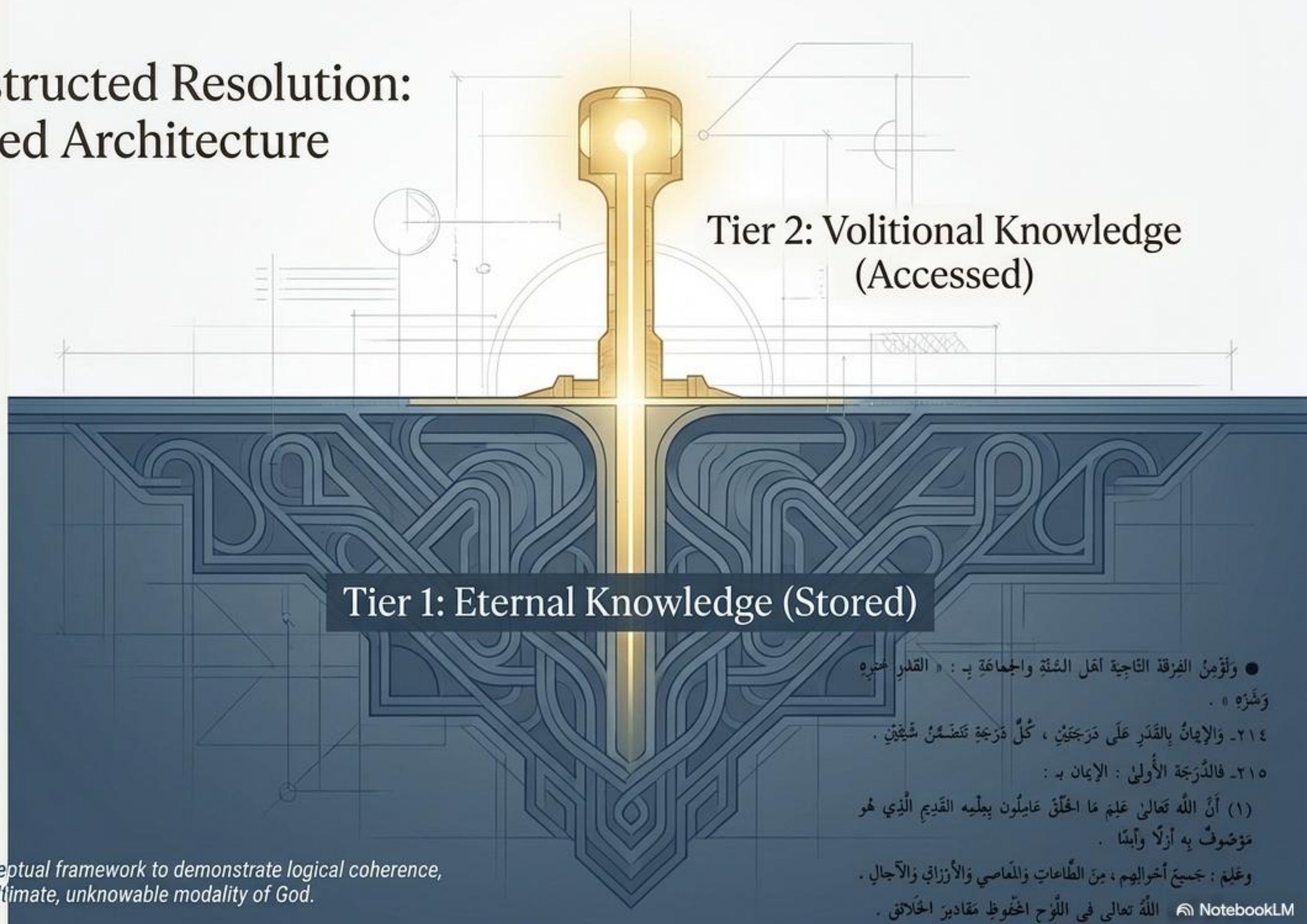
Historical Missteps in Resolving the Infinite

Theological Model	Maintains Real Multiplicity	Covers Infinite Details	Avoids Actual Infinite
Al-Juwayni's Istirsal Claims God knows future substances but passes over infinite individual accidents. Fails to uphold perfect detailed knowledge.			
The Ignorance Heresy Claims God only knows a finite subset at any time, moving from ignorance to knowledge. Violates God's maximal perfection.			
Divine Simplicity Claims knowledge is just one indivisible attribute connecting via relations. Denies real attributional multiplicity.			

The Reconstructed Resolution: A Two-Tiered Architecture

God's omniscience operates through two distinct but harmonious modalities, allowing perfect knowledge without an actual infinite.

Caveat: This is a human conceptual framework to demonstrate logical coherence, not a definitive claim on the ultimate, unknowable modality of God.



● وَلَوْ أَنَّ الْفِرْقَةَ التَّاجِيَةَ أَقْلَ الشُّعْبَةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ بِ: « الْقَدْرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ » .

٢١٤- وَالْإِيمَانُ بِالْقَدْرِ عَلَى دَرَجَتَيْنِ ، كُلُّ دَرَجَةٍ تَنْصَرُّ شَيْئَيْنِ .

٢١٥- فَالدَّرَجَةُ الْأُولَى : الْإِيمَانُ بِ :

(١) أَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى عَلِيمٌ مَا خَلَقَ عَامِلُونَ بِعِلْمِهِ الْقَدِيمِ الَّذِي هُوَ مَوْصُوفٌ بِهِ أَزَلًا وَأَبَدًا .

وَعَلِيمٌ : جَمِيعَ أَخْوَالِهِمْ ، مِنْ الطَّاعَاتِ وَالْمَعَاصِي وَالْأَزْوَاجِ وَالْآجَالِ .

اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِي اللُّوحِ الْخَفِيُّ مَقَادِيرَ الْخَلَائِقِ . NotebookLM

Tier 1: Eternal Stored Knowledge

Continuous Flow
(Qualitative Complexity)



Structurally fixed, ontologically finite in multiplicity,
but unimaginably complex to cover all knowables.

The Metaphor: In *Majmu' al-Fatawa* (Vol. 16), Ibn Taymiyyah describes the multiplicity of knowledge using structurally qualitative terms rather than discrete quantitative terms.

Accumulated Coins
(Quantitative Infinity)



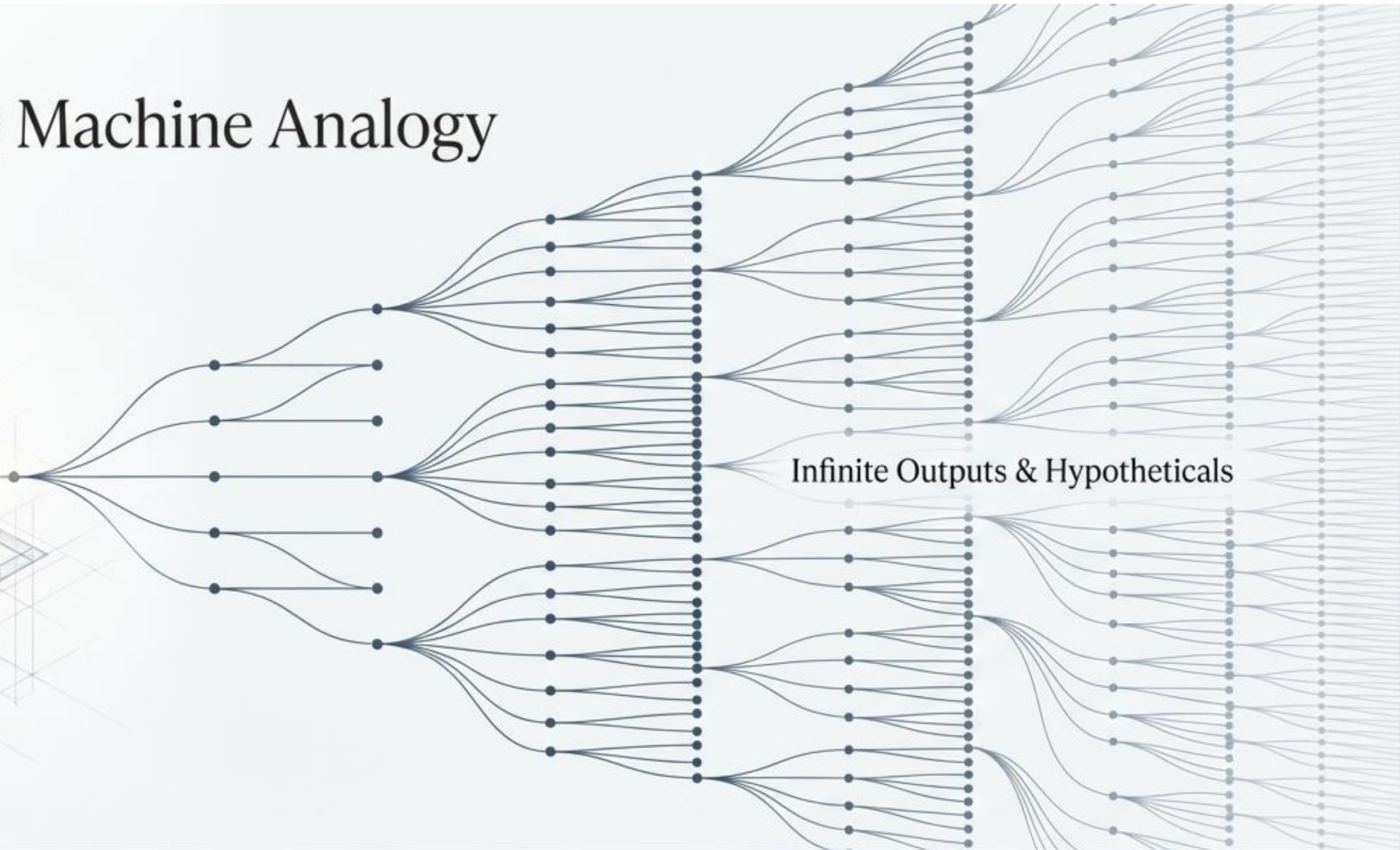
Composed of infinite discrete parts existing simultaneously,
which creates an impossible actual infinite.

والشماع العلم إلى المليم والإرادة إلى الإرادة والقدر إلى القدرة، هو شيء بالشماع
الآحاد والافضل، كذا إذا زيد فيه جاء، فإنه يكثر قدره، لكن هو ثم متصل لا متفصل،
بمختلف الدراهم.
/ فإذا قيل: لا تعددت العلوم والإرادات فهو إشبار عن كثرة قدرها وأنها أكثر وأصغر مما
كانت، لا أن هناك معدودات متفصلة كما قد يلهم بعض الناس
وأما كان العلم اسم جنس، فلا يكاد يجمع في الشرائع بل يقال: «فمن حاطت فيه من
بعد ما حاطت من الفقه» (ال عمران: ١١)، فيذكر الجنس، فيذكر الماء، ليس في الشرائع أكثر
منه بل إذا يذكر جنس الماء، فيذكر من الشماع من ظهوره في الفرقان: ٤٧٨، وسبح

The Turing Machine Analogy



Finitely Complex
Foundation



Infinite Outputs & Hypotheticals

The Conceptual Leap

How can an ontologically finite structure cover infinitely many knowable things without being infinitely composed?

The Modern Analogy

A theoretical Turing machine relies on a finitely complex foundational architecture, yet it possesses the capacity to generate infinitely many varied outputs.

A Fortiori Application

If boundless richness and infinite generative capacity are entirely plausible in designed, created systems, they are all the more logically plausible within God's perfect Eternal knowledge.

Tier 2: Volitional Accessed Knowledge

Immediate & Independent

Unlike human recall, which involves effort, external triggers, or overcoming forgetfulness, divine access is effortless, volitional, and independent.

Successive Focus

God is attributed with volitional knowledge that arises successively. He actively accesses particulars from His Eternal knowledge as required by His perfect nature.

Eternal Stored

The Divine Decree (Sahih Muslim)

God voluntarily accessed, decreed, and recorded the entire future of the universe fifty-thousand years before creating the heavens and the earth."

The Tensed Reality of Divine Conceptions



Real Change in Conception

As God actualizes worldly matters, His conception of them changes in a tensed way. God's knowledge of these three distinct states is not identical. This demonstrates active perfection and real attributional multiplicity in action, opposing static simplicity.

The Ultimate Constraint: No Infinite Simultaneous Access



The Rule

The theory posits that God never accesses infinitely many knowables from His Eternal knowledge simultaneously in a single moment. Doing so would place an actual infinity of active beliefs in His essence.

The Infinite Words Analogy

God possesses infinitely many words that can never be exhausted, yet He never utters an infinite number of words simultaneously.

Historical Corroboration via Critique

The Accusation by Abu Sa'id al-'Ala'i

ذلك، وصنف جزءاً في أن علم الله لا يتعلق بالأشياء هي كنهم أهل الجنة، وأنه لا يحيط بالنهاي وهي التي زلق فيها الإمام، ومنها أن الأنبياء غير معصومين، وأن نبينا عليه وعليهم الصلاة والسلام ليس له جاه ولا يتوسل به أحد إلا ويكون مخطئاً، وصنف في ذلك حدة أوراق، وإن أنشأ السفر لزيارة نبينا ﷺ معصية لا تقتصر فيها الصلاة، وبالع في ذلك، ولم يقل به أحد من المسلمين قبله، وأن عذاب أهل النار يتقطع ولا يتأبد سكا به بعض الفقهاء عن

Al-'Ala'i accused Ibn Taymiyyah of believing God's conception does not simultaneously pertain to the infinite future bliss of Paradise, polemically linking this to al-Juwayni's flawed *istirsal*.

The Historical Irony

Though al-'Ala'i dismissed Ibn Taymiyyah's belief in Eternal Knowledge (which does cover all of Paradise), his attack proves a crucial point about the mechanics of the framework.

Unwitting Confirmation

This critique historically verifies that Ibn Taymiyyah strictly held to the 'No Simultaneous Access' rule. He insisted that God never simultaneously accesses the infinitely many future details of Paradise, precisely to avoid creating an actual infinite.

Resolving Edge Cases: Attributes & Hypotheticals

Objection 1: Eternal Attributes

What about God's permanent knowledge of His own essence and non-volitional attributes (like Life and Hands)?



Resolution

These attributes are eternally accessed, but because God's attributes are ontologically finite, this continuous access does not result in an actual infinite.

Objection 2: Unactualized Hypotheticals

Does God have to actively access every possible hypothetical to be perfect?



Resolution

True perfection means knowing all hypotheticals perfectly via Eternal Stored Knowledge, and having the effortless ability to access them when His perfect nature demands it. It does not require constantly actively processing every infinite hypothetical.

The Promise of Paradise: Grasping the Universal

The Objection: If God doesn't conceptually access all infinite individual blessings of Paradise simultaneously, how can He reliably promise believers that Paradise is without end?



Inductive Counting

God does not need to inductively count an infinite number of discrete future days to verify the truth of eternity.



The Universal Proposition

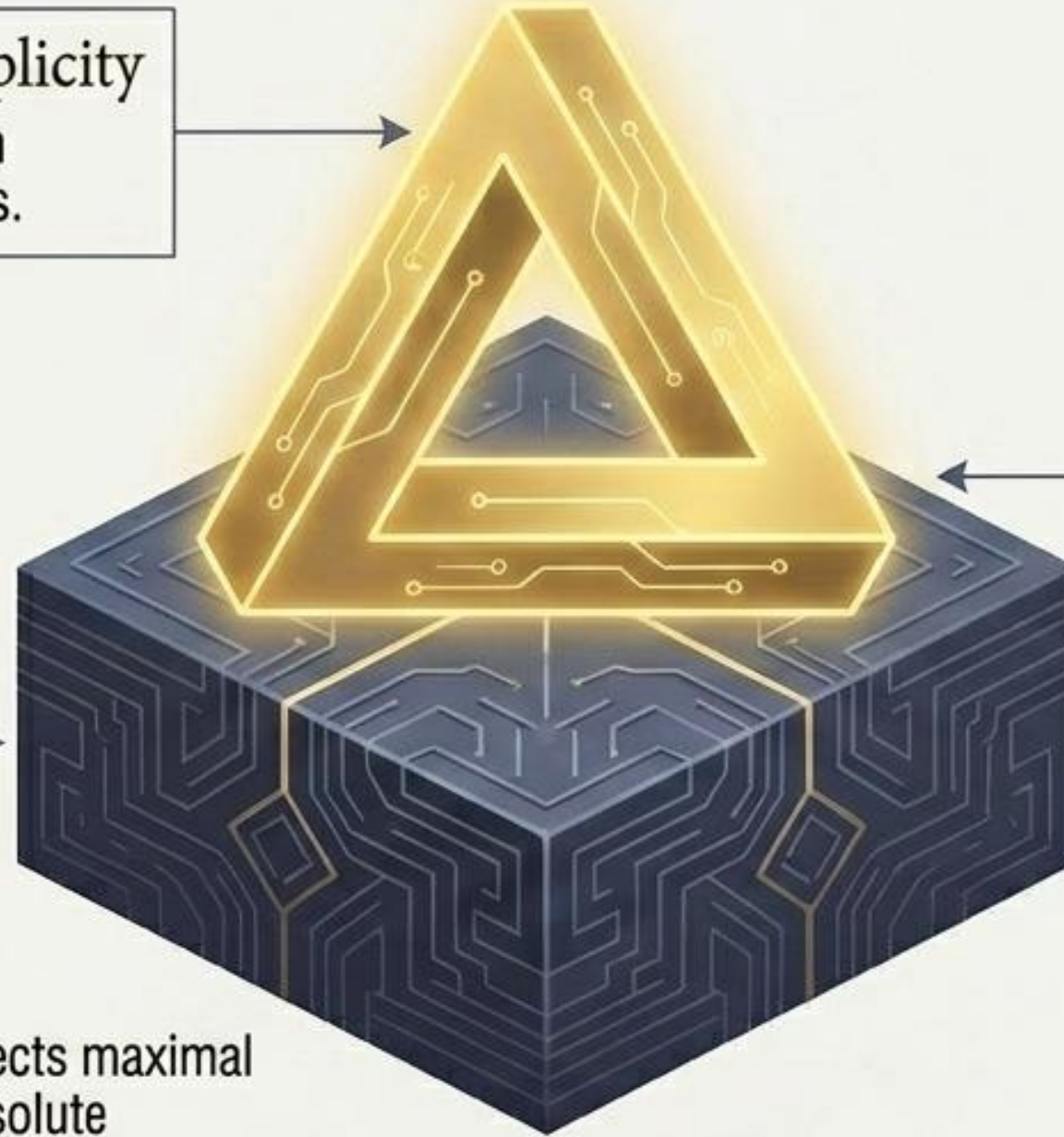
God effortlessly accesses universal propositions directly from His Eternal knowledge. He directly accesses the overarching truth: "There is no end to Paradise", perfectly preserving the promise of eternal bliss without requiring an actual infinite.

Synthesis: The Trilemma Resolved

1. Maintains Multiplicity
Through real 'change' in
volitional, tensed access.

2. Covers Infinite Particulars
Through incredibly complex,
structurally fixed Eternal Knowledge.

3. Defeats the Actual Infinite
By strictly denying simultaneous
conceptual access of infinite details.



Conclusion:

A logically coherent model that fully respects maximal divine perfection without violating the absolute boundaries of mathematics and reason.

All praise is due to God, the Lord of the worlds.